Work is Everyone’s Business!

ACBHCS Vocational Program

SUMMER 2016

More Than Just A Job Placement Program

While most of you know that the Vocational Program helps people get jobs, you might not be aware that we provide a variety of other services to help people reach their full employment potential.

First, our employment staff provide close support to people when they start working. This can include on the job coaching, where we help people learn their tasks and navigate the work environment. We also assist people offsite from their jobs, helping them manage any issues that might impact their work and celebrating their job milestones.

We also help people with developing their careers through vocational counseling and supported education services. Our team assists people with enrolling, staying in, and graduating from GED programs, vocational training, community colleges, and universities. This can include career counseling, linking to campus resources, organizing finances, class enrollment, study skills, and transition planning. You can read a bit more about this in Breton’s article about “Julie” on page 3.

Finally, in 2013, we started offering cognitive remediation therapy to some people who struggle to reach their employment goals due to problems with memory, problem solving, and other cognitive areas. This 12-week program, called Thinking Skills for Work, has helped people improve these areas and successfully go to work. You can read more about it on page 2 in Theresa’s article.

—Jackie Pogue, IPS Trainer

More Than Just A Job Placement Program

Personal Passion Baked into Local Bagel Shop

Sam and Karyna Kauv have been in the bagel business for 17 years and opened Levy’s Bagels in Alameda in 2013. They specialize in East Coast style bagels that are first boiled in water and then baked in a special rotisserie oven. Karyna shares that their made from scratch bagels are a healthier fast food choice, a “fat-free pseudo-doughnut.” They are proud not to use any preservatives and offer a variety of bagel flavors and sandwiches.

Karyna and Sam met Vocational Program employment specialist Michael Castilla when their shop first opened. He stopped by while doing employer outreach and has helped them find two great delivery drivers over the past few years. “He checks in on us so often— that’s a great thing about Michael… He helps us find very reliable staff.”

Stop by Levy’s Bagels and Co. at 730 Atlantic Ave. in Alameda to enjoy delicious bagels at a great, local business. Karyna recommends the breakfast sandwich on a jalapeno cheddar bagel and Michael loves the French toast bagel with strawberry cream cheese.

Thank you, Sam and Karyna, for being a wonderful employer partner!

—Jackie Pogue, IPS Trainer

Levy’s Bagels and Co.’s Sam Kauv bakes goods from scratch at his family bagel shop.
Cognitive Remediation Therapy Improves Memory and Job Skills

The Vocational Program has integrated a promising practice into our services that is designed to help consumers to address cognitive barriers while they are trying to find a job. In August 2013, we received training from Dr. Susan McGurk, a neuropsychologist and principle researcher for the Thinking Skills for Work (TSW) Program at Boston University. She developed the TSW program specifically to assist individuals with schizophrenia and other mental health challenges that struggle with memory, coordination and planning, organization, prioritizing, and decision-making. Participating in the program can make quite a difference. Research has shown that when participants are tested two years after completing the TSW program, they still retain the cognitive enhancement they earned in the program.

TSW is a 12 week program that people participate in alongside their job search. They are identified as possible candidates for the program when they have been enrolled in IPS for at least 12 weeks and have not been able to acquire work or have gotten jobs and not been able to keep them due to poor memory and organizational skills. The curriculum includes a psycho-social group and 45-90 minutes of individual activity using a cognitive remediation computer program. The software includes various cognitive games that playfully support creating order, increasing memory, and critical thinking. People are guided through a series of 36 self-driven modules over the course of the 12 weeks.

Our vocational team serves as cognitive specialists who observe, teach, coach, and encourage participants through the program, using a positive, strength-based approach where every effort of thinking and learning are acknowledged as progress. They offer compensatory strategies to improve how to approach and maneuver through particular exercises to improve their score.

There have been six 12 week sessions of TSW so far, serving people from Eden, Oakland, Tri-City, ACMHS and Alameda clinics. Many who have participated in the training got jobs before the 12 weeks was over. People who have participated in the program are quite satisfied with the outcomes. Comments include: “The program doesn’t make you feel dumb. Everything is positive, the feedback, etc.” And, “I saw my memory improve.”

The Vocational Program will continue to use TSW to assist people that seem stuck due to cognitive barriers. Currently, it is offered twice per year.

—Theresa Razzano, Rehabilitation Director

Special Thanks to Our 2015-16 Employers for Providing 99 Jobs for People!

A1 Security Inc.  Jack in the Box  Oakland Unified School District
Alameda Unified  Dollar Tree  Ken Foster Medical Inc.
School District  Don Jose’s Mexican  Kohls
Amazon  Restaurant  La Universal Magazine
AMC Theatre  EKS Security  LaBella’s Pool & Supplies
Autozone  Empire Events  Levy’s Bagels and Co.
Balance Staffing  Everett and Jones BBQ  Liberty Tax
Bay Linen  Field Works  Mama’s Vietnamese
Big 5 Sporting Goods  Fremont Optometric  Restaurant
BJ’s Restaurant  Food Maxx  Marshall’s
Blue Apron  Gap Inc.  McDonald’s
Burger King  GSO Priority Delivery  National Center for
Cal Student Store  Home Depot  Youth Law
Chuck Corica Golf  Hutch’s Car Wash  Noah’s Bagels
Course  In-Shape City Health  Oakley Unified School
Cinemark Theater  Jack in the Box  District

DD’S Discount  Ken Foster Medical Inc.
Dollar Tree  Kohls
Don Jose’s Mexican  La Universal Magazine
Restaurant  LaBella’s Pool & Supplies
EKS Security  Levy’s Bagels and Co.
Empire Events  Liberty Tax
Everett and Jones BBQ  Mama’s Vietnamese
Field Works  Restaurant
Fremont Optometric  Marshall’s
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Gap Inc.  National Center for
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Home Depot  Noah’s Bagels
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District

Special Dispatch of CA  Target
Telecare Corporation  Thrift Town
Thrift Town  TMA Construction
TMA Construction  Togos Sandwiches
Togos Sandwiches  Toys R Us
U-Haul  United Postal Service
United Postal Service  Walmart
Walmart  Wash Depot
Wash Depot  Wendy’s
Wendy’s  Whole Foods Market
Whole Foods Market  Wing Stop
Wing Stop  Woody Laundromat
Woody Laundromat  World Financial Group
World Financial Group  Zeroin Staffing
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“Julie” had never worked; indeed, her self-expectation – and those who professionally helped her – was to manage well enough to keep out of jail and adhere to clinical regimes designed to keep her stable. No one expected more, and therefore Julie accepted this track as being the best she could expect from herself.

When I first engaged her with my usual query: “So what would you like to do with your life, Julie?”, the words thudded dully against a blank wall that she had built to shield her secret wish of being able to relate better to people. Julie had trouble articulating her thoughts, and her responses were invariably terse and defensive - a result of years being viewed as less perceptive than her peers. This façade deliberately put folks off, and masked her yearning to be understood and respected by others. Being prickly gets respect, too, and it was the best substitute she felt she could manage.

In talking with her over time, and from an IPS stance that she could be who she wants to be, it came out that she had always wanted to get her GED. This goal was driven by her perception that if she were educated, she would be able to communicate her thoughts better and thereby improve her social relationships. Getting her GED was something she did not think was possible – no one else had seemed to either - but over time and with support, she gradually made steps in this direction, and began to believe she could do it.

Along the journey, it became evident that she believed any chance of employment she might have was contingent on her at least having graduated from high school. From the inception, I had offered employment as a real option for her- just as she is- and had counseled that, although education does enhance career goals, it is not a hoop she necessarily had to jump through if she wanted to work. As these new vistas gradually opened up for her and percolated over time, she sorted out that she really wanted to work and her primary goal in getting her GED was to improve her communication skills. We discussed that she could do both: get a job and take classes to improve her English while not necessarily having to forestall work in order to focus on her GED. She could also hone her communication skills in a job.

The very act of articulating her thoughts successfully to me around her education aspirations and to the employment specialist about her vocational interests boosted her self-image to the extent of developing a plan. This was first to work, and then take classes once stable in the job. When she first contemplated employment, she wanted an isolated position, like dishwasher, so as to avoid having to interact and communicate. At the time of placement, however, her self-image had risen enough that she accepted a front end job bussing tables at a restaurant involving staff and customer contact.

Julie still wants to take classes, and we are going one step at a time. After all, no one - including Julie - ever thought she could work, but work she did and the journey of growth continues. The seeds of self-discovery have taken root, and the successful outcome is that growth is a real goal now for Julie.

—Breton Courtney, Mental Health Specialist

Supported Education Develops Careers

We are now providing more help to people when they want to go to school or training as part of their career development. Our team of mental health specialists and rehabilitation counselors provide an array of support to help people enroll, stay in school, and graduate. This can include: researching programs, applying for financial aid, linking to campus resources, enrolling in classes, managing issues that may come up, and celebrating successes.

Over the past few years, people have successfully participated in a variety of education programs, including:

♦ Laney College
♦ Chabot College
♦ Las Positas College
♦ St. Vincent de Paul Kitchen of Champions
♦ GED programs
♦ Security Guard training
♦ Certified Nursing Assistant training
♦ UC Berkeley Extension
Fashion Interest and Dedication Lead to Success

In March, Shannon Bali started working as a sales associate at ROSS Dress for Less in the Southland Mall in Hayward. She works in the stock room, unpacking and preparing shoes and purses for the sales floor. “I like working at ROSS because I like the store and it’s close to my school and home.”

Shannon wanted a job at ROSS and together with her employment specialist Dawn Hanson made it happen. “Dawn prepared me for the interview with the manager— we practiced in the car,” Shannon shared. Dawn added, “What sealed the deal during the interview was Shannon’s interest in fashion and fashion design.” Her mother also helped her prepare for the interview and get work clothes.

Over the past four months, the management has been very supportive of Shannon, allowing for Dawn to provide on the job coaching to help her learn the job. “She came in and showed me what to do and how to work with the shoes,” Shannon described. Also, her stockroom supervisor Monica and coworker Erick have helped her. Dawn remarked, “They are very happy to have her on the job. She has been doing great.”

When asked about how working has improved her life, Shannon says, “Now I have something more to do and I get paid. Before, I was home. Now there are more things to do and I go to school.” She goes to Chabot College for English classes and is interested in pursuing fashion design or library assistance.

Shannon advice to others? “You have to have confidence when you have a job interview. If you want a job, you have to be prepared to work.”

—Jackie Pogue, IPS Trainer

Network of IPS Programs Help More People

Over the past several years, BHCS has developed more IPS supported employment services within our mental health programs in Alameda County. This means that more people are able to get help with going to work or school without having to get linked to outside agencies. In addition, there’s a wider network of employment staff to meet the needs of employers.

You can find IPS employment specialists at these agencies:

- BHCS Vocational Program
- Fred Finch Youth Center
- Bay Area Community Services (BACS)
- Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency (BOSS)
- East Bay Community Recovery Project
- Telecare Corporation
- Bonita House, Inc.
- Abode Services

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